

expense tempted to the rescue. Their pluck was proved once more in Admiral Boisot's victorious encounter with a Spanish fleet at Romerswaal on the Scheldt. As the result of this exploit Mondragon was forced to surrender Middelburg. The patriots were now indisputable masters of the sea-coast from the Scheldt to the Helder. About midway between these extremities, and some distance inland, lay Leyden, and round Leyden the Spaniards coiled their serried ranks to cannonade or starve it into surrender. Count Louis' ill-starred attempt to relieve it with a force of mercenaries, raised with French money, was frustrated at Mookheath (Mookerheide), where his mutinous army was outmanoeuvred and annihilated by Avila, and its hapless leader and his brother Henry slain (April 1574). It was a fell stroke that deprived William at once of two brothers—the chivalrous, indefatigable Louis, best of them all—and of all hope of succour on land. But even this *coup de massue* did not crush him, as appears from his spirited letter to his only surviving brother John. "I told you formerly that we could maintain this country for the space of two years against all the forces of the King of Spain, but that after that period we should necessarily stand in need of succour, unless God should, as He has done hitherto, sustain our cause without human succour (I speak humanly). Seeing that the two years are about to expire, it is high time that some princes and potentates should hold out to us a helping hand. If none of them will come to the rescue, and for want of succour we shall be undone, let it be so in the name of God. There shall always remain to us the honour of having done that which no other nation has done before us, to wit, the defence and maintenance, in a small country, of a great cause, against the great and horrible enterprises of so powerful enemies without any assistance whatsoever. And if the poor inhabitants of this land, forsaken by all the world, will only continue in their determination, as they have done hitherto, and as I hope they will still do (and God will not deliver us over to destruction), it will cost the Spaniards more than the half of Spain, as well in goods as in men, before they shall have made an end of us." To a man of this spirit even the disaster of Mookheath was not irremediable. Moreover, Louis' fateful advance had drawn off Valdez and his siege army from Leyden. The